3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

852 304 Children of Ngoni families, as also these others, chose their own time to have their ears pierced, though sometimes their father or father's sister or father's mother reminded them that it was about time. It was nearly always soon after the second teeth had come, and children who delayed having it done were taunted by their fellows: 'You, are you afraid, my age-mate? See my ears already have bone in them.' This [231] was a reference to the round plugs of bone inserted when the hole was large enough. A bit of thread was put in at first, then a small bit of grass, then a fine reed, and finally a bone plug. Ear piercing was always done in the cold weather so that the lobe of the ear would heal quickly. It was carried out by a leading woman of one of the Ngoni families, who watched the children to see how they took it. They knew it was a test of courage, and however much they were afraid it would hurt, [152] they stood like little statues during the operation, with a face as set and expressionless as when they were being beaten.

Accountability for individual behaviour was one aspect of 866 the responsibility which Ngoni adults now began to demand 868 from children. Another aspect was the performance of their allotted tasks. The responsibility for cattle herding was in a sense a corporate responsibility of all the boys whose fathers owned cattle. The older herd-boys had in fact to answer for [233] the condition of the cattle they brought back every evening to their owners. They passed on, however, a number of small duties, such as care of the calves, sheep and goats, to the younger boys, who in turn were held responsible by the older boys for performing these duties. The boys' world, centred in the dormitory, recognized grades of responsibility from which no one escaped.

Another facet of responsibility which was at a later stage 868 remarked on often by Ngoni adults, was seen in children's [517] choice of leisure-time occupations, according to their individual manual and intellectual and artistic capacities. They stopped playing childish games and began instead to develope their skills in making things from local materials.

6:Rattray E,G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

XXV

SOME RIDDLES AND PROVERBS

I. "COME, let us give riddles to-day," some one says, and then every one collects, and the hut is packed. One begins to say, "Such and such a thing, what is it?" And should his companions give up, then (the one who gave the riddle) says, "Then kill me so and so's cattle." And they do so (in pretence), saying, "Go and eat what's his name's." And he has them stabbed, the meat is all over the place, and eats and eats, and says, "The answer is so and so."

SOME RIDDLES

Q. Something without a spoor; what is that?
A. An arrow.

Q. Something that cannot be bound.
A. The winds. (Perhaps water, or smoke.)

Q. Something with a very keen scent; for even if you hide away some little thing you have, it goes and finds it out. What is that?
A. A fly.

Q. Something which warms itself with its back to the fire.
A. The shelf above the fire, in a hut.

Q. A war which baffles all of you; there is one little thing, spoiling for a fight, that goes and tackles it. What is that?
A. The porridge stick.

Q. A person shoots his arrow up in the air, and when it returns, it does so without its shaft.
A. Winged white ant. (Because when it flies off it has wings, but falls without its wings.)